

Summer 1991

Ballast Quarterly Review, v06n4, Summer 1991

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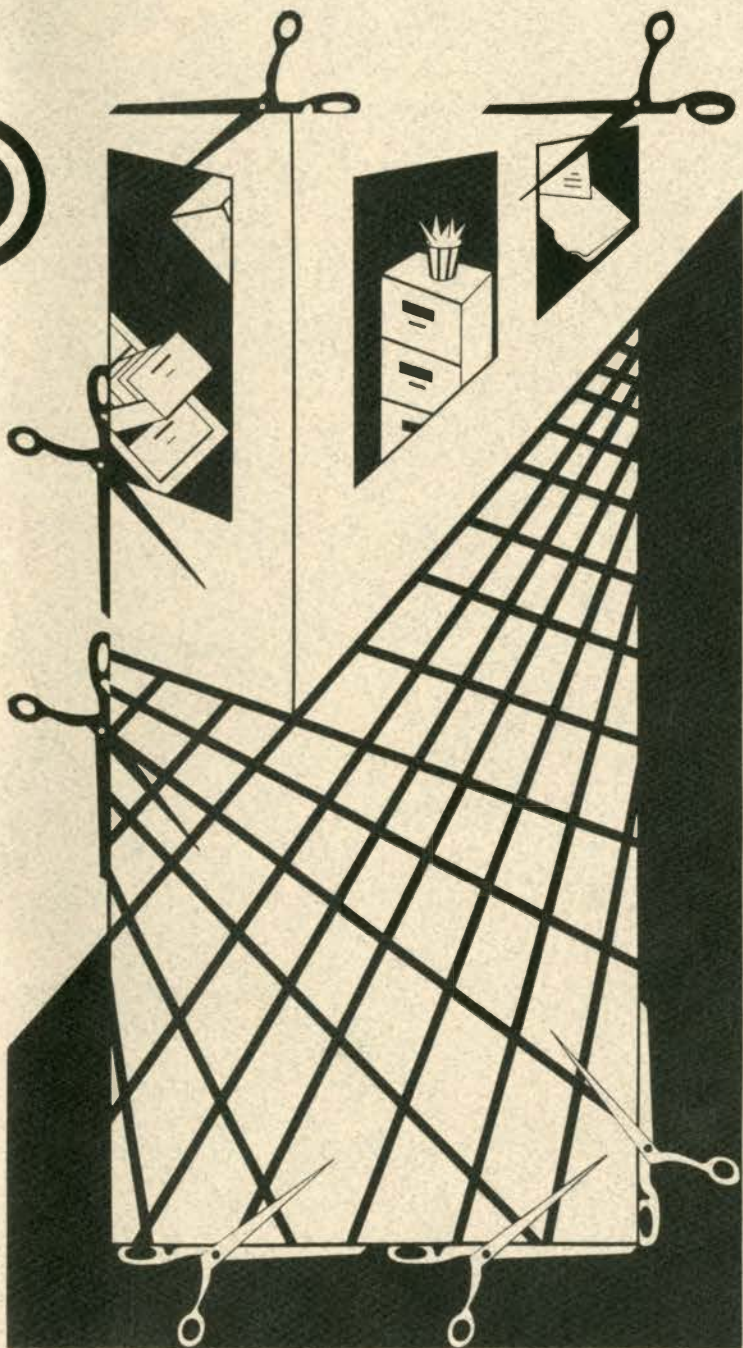
Recommended Citation

Behrens, Roy R., "Ballast Quarterly Review, v06n4, Summer 1991" (1991). *Ballast Quarterly Review*. 23.
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Volume
Six
Number
Four
Summer
1991



**John
Updike** (*The
Writer's
Chapbook*):
When I
write, I aim
in my mind
not toward
New York
but toward
a vague
spot a little
to the east
of Kansas.

**Ballast Quarterly Review, Volume 6,
Number 4, Summer 1991. Founder, Editor,
Art Director, Periodic Kingpin,
Coryphaeus Cum Laude, Overseer of
Oversights, Vice-Roy, Top Brass, Super-
damned-intendent, Gaffer, Top, and Penny
Dog: Roy R. Behrens. Copyright © 1991 by
Roy R. Behrens.**

BALLAST is an acronym for Books Art Language Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching, as well as a distant allusion to **BLAST**, the short-lived publication founded during World War I by Wyndham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and writer. **BALLAST** began in Bratislava in 1985, moved to Saragossa, then Frankfurt am Main, then north to Helsinki, then Leeds, now Iowa. Initially it was a protest against lichenology, garrulity, and sappanwood. Its editor having slid into the muck of middle-aged somnambulism, it is now chiefly a pastiche of more or less sticky extractions from books, magazines, diaries and other publications. Put differently, it is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought-provoking.

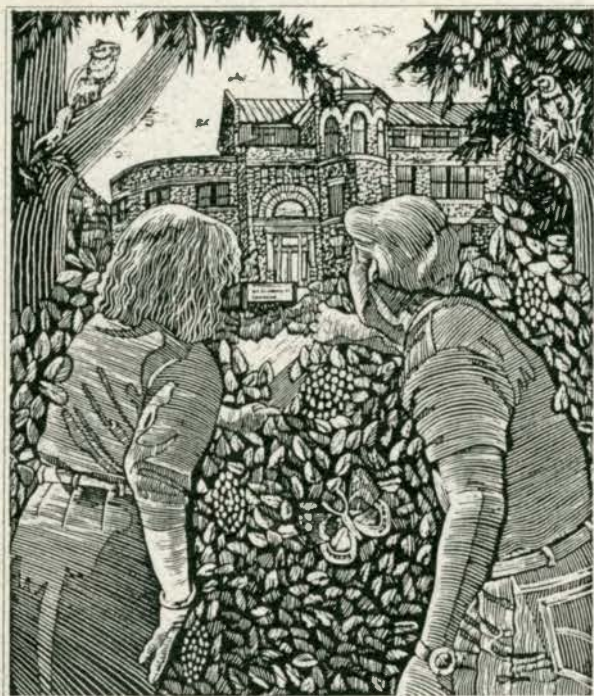
The purposes of **BALLAST** are educational, apolitical and noncommercial. It does not carry paid advertisements, nor is it supposed to be purchased or sold. It is published every three months, more or less, beginning in October and ending in June. There is no charge for subscriptions as such, and (to the extent that finances allow) the journal will gladly be mailed to persons who send in a mailing address and two first class U.S. postage stamps for each issue. In other words, to receive **BALLAST** for one year (four issues), we ask that each reader contribute a total of eight genuine unused U.S. postage stamps, interesting or not. Do not send postage meter stamps. When subscribing, good-looking, antique and/or unusual stamps are preferred — ever go to a philatelists' convention, or a stamp collectors' shop? (At the moment we are especially fond of the delightful new "rutabaga commemorative" — just ask for it at your post office window.) We do *not* accept phone orders.

Cover illustration by graduate student Jennifer Helm, Graphic Design Program, Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls

I am only one, only one, only. Only one being, one at the same time. Not two, not three, only one. Only one life to live, only sixty minutes in one hour. Only one pair of eyes. Only one brain. Only one being. Being only one, having only one pair of eyes, having only one time, having only one life, I cannot read your MS three or four times. Not even one time. Only one look, only one look is enough. Hardly one copy would sell here. Hardly one. Hardly one.

Letter sent by a publisher to Gertrude Stein in rejecting her manuscript *Ida: A Novel* in 1941, quoted in Andre Bernard, ed., *Rotten Rejections – A Literary Companion* (New York: Pushcart Press, 1990), p. 90. Suggested by Douglas J. Nelsen, a reader from Stillwater, Minnesota.

Nancy Hopkins



This morning Gunda [Stolz] said, "Isn't life awful?" In the evening Moholy [Laszlo Moholy-Nagy]: "Isn't life beeootifool? Vat do yoo tink, Schlemmarr?"

Oskar Schlemmer, in a letter dated 27 April 1926 in Tut Schlemmer, ed., *The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), p. 194.

When he [Einstein] was puzzled by a problem, he would often lapse unconsciously into German, and this sometimes led him to a solution... [When he was] stumped, Einstein would say, "I will a little tink." Then, "he would pace up and down and walk around in circles, all the time twirling a lock of his long gray hair around his forefinger." His face showed no strain, and he gave the impression of being in another universe.

Jamie Sayen, *Einstein in America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1985), p. 89.

The following happened to the French playwright [Victorien Sardou] at a literary dinner party:

Sardou knocked over his wine glass and the woman at his side sprinkled salt on the stained tablecloth; Sardou tossed some of the salt over his shoulder to ward off bad luck.

The salt hit the butler in the eyes.

The butler rubbed his eyes and dropped a platter of chicken on the floor.

The family dog began devouring the chicken and choked on a chicken bone.

The son of the house tried to loosen the chicken bone from the dog's throat.

The dog bit the boy's finger.

The boy's finger had to be amputated.

Robert Hendrickson, ed., *World Literary Anecdotes* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), p. 214).

Right: Wood engraving of house painters by Robert Gibbins (1921), a forgotten British printmaker, from Patience Empson, ed., *The Wood Engravings of Robert Gibbins* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1959).



[Michael] Caine points out that, to most good actors, "less is more." He offers as evidence Marlon Brando, who "denies the camera his eyes," says Caine. "Half the time he's looking down or away. Then suddenly he looks up, and you are absolutely fascinated by his eyes."

Lloyd Shearer, "Michael Caine on Acting" in *Parade Magazine*, 12 August 1990, p. 21.

Henny Youngman:
Did y'hear about the time they crossed a mink with a gorilla? They got a nice coat but the sleeves were too long.

Grant Wood: The best ideas I ever had came to me while I was milking a cow.



I remember a funny dinner at my brother's, where, amongst a few others, were [the mathematician Charles] Babbage and [the geologist Charles] Lyell, both of whom liked to talk. [The historian Thomas] Carlyle, however, silenced everyone by haranguing during the whole dinner on the advantages of silence. After dinner, Babbage, in his grimmest manner, thanked Carlyle for his very interesting lecture on silence.

Charles Darwin, quoted in Richard Kenin and Justin Wintle, *The Dictionary of Biographical Quotation* (New York: Dorset Press, 1978), p. 41.

Grandma Moses (Anna Mary Robertson): If I didn't start painting, I would have raised chickens.

An example of how intimately life and writing are connected in Japan: During a recent devastating typhoon, hundreds of people, among them fifty children, were stranded on Yoshino mountain in Nara prefecture. A helicopter flying over noticed the children standing in lines forming the Japanese ideograph for "Help!".

Rudolf Arnheim, *Parables of Sun Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 9. Suggested by Douglas J. Nelsen, a reader from Stillwater, Minnesota.

Highly Recommended: Kimberly Elam, *Expressive Typography: The Word as Image* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990). A panoramic sampling of modern graphic design in which typography is used illustratively, either as gesture or picture. Of particular interest are experimental student works from American design schools.

Once Hans Panofsky chauffeured his father, [the art historian] Erwin, and Einstein to an art collection outside Philadelphia. On the return trip, to the chagrin of the younger Panofsky, who was driving with an expired California license, a policeman stopped the car. He had no interest in the driver but, rather, simply stopped the car to be sure that he had indeed spotted the great Einstein.

Jamie Sayen, *Einstein in America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1985), p. 69.

He [Max Ernst, painter and collagist] saw his father paint a picture from nature in the garden and finish it in his studio. His father suppressed a bough in his picture because it disturbed the composition. Then he cut off the same bough in the garden, so that there should no longer be a difference between nature and his picture.

Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

Highly Recommended (software for Macintosh computers): *TypeStyler* Version 1.5, published by Broderbund, 17 Paul Drive, San Rafael, California 94903-2101. For graphic designers, one of the easiest, most helpful, and least expensive programs available for type manipulation (bend, squeeze, arch, stretch, twist, flip, rotate).

When Sitting Bull was called upon [to speak to an audience of Minnesota businessmen in 1883], the soldier [serving as his English translator] motioned to him and he rose clumsily, but to the astonishment and horror of the soldier, said: "I hate you. I hate you. I hate all the white people. You are thieves and liars. You have taken away our land and made us outcasts, so I hate you." The soldier, sure there were very few in the audience with any knowledge of the [Sioux] language, realized it was up to him to preserve peace. He sat quietly until Sitting Bull had finished and then, probably with every hair on his head standing on end, he rose smiling and delivered, as the interpretation, the friendly, courteous speech he had prepared which met with approval of the crowd.

Kate E. Glaspell, quoted in Isabelle S. Sayers, *Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (New York: Dover Publications, 1981), p. 12. Suggested by Edna Milner, a reader from Tulsa, Oklahoma.



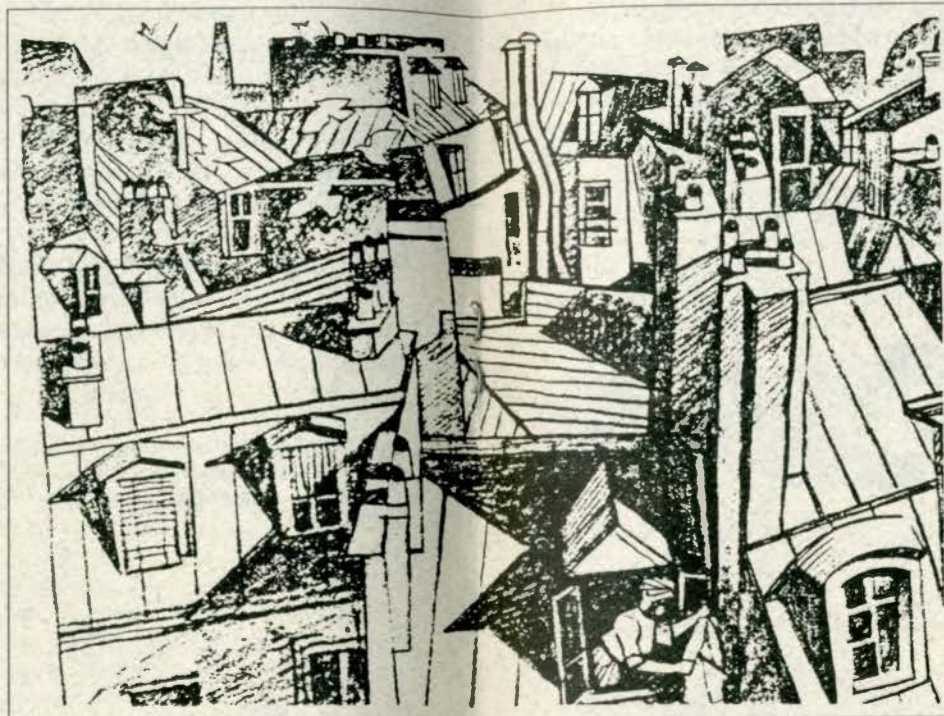
Robert Gibbons

Joseph Rosenberg: The Republicans are thinking of changing the Republican Party emblem from an elephant to a condom, because it stands for inflation, halts production, and gives one a false sense of security while being screwed.

In art I am focused on one point where everything comes together; this point determines all the relationships. If I lose it, reality gains the upper hand, and I am reduced to nothing. I become weak, fainthearted, despairing, almost intolerably restless, irritable — and if I rediscover that point, I feel comfortable, good ideas come to me unbidden, I am devout, in harmony, and all is well.

Oskar Schlemmer [Bauhaus theatre designer], in a diary entry in Tut Schlemmer, ed., *The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), p. 122.

Highly Recommended: Ronald Labuz, *Contemporary Graphic Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991). A visual/verbal smorgasbord of design styles of the 80s, including New Wave, Punk, Techno, Retro, Postmodern and others. An invigorating inventory of trends that a prominent Modernist (guess who) calls "dingbat design."



Gary Kelley

I remember a foreword to a de Kooning catalog in which the author said, "By 1927, he had mastered the academic problems." Who the hell ever did? Did Hokusai? Nobody ever did. Nobody ever drew well enough.

Jack Levine, interviewed by Joseph Podlesnik in "Jack Levine: Nothing New, Nothing Old, Just Good and Bad" in *Q: A Journal of Art* (Ithaca, NY: Department of Art, Cornell University), May 1991, p. 15.

A rejection memo from a Chinese economic journal: "We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper, it would be impossible for us to publish any work of lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that in the next thousand years we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition, and to beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity."

Andre Bernard, ed., *Rotten Rejections — A Literary Companion* (New York: Pushcart Press, 1990), p. 44. Suggested by Douglas J. Nelsen, a reader from Stillwater, Minnesota.

"How is it my darling," [the philosopher John Stuart] Mill inquired [of his wife, Harriet], "that you say you have broken the habit of expectoration? When you cough are you not obliged to swallow something if you do not spit it up?" "I cannot but think," replied Harriet with her characteristic note of self-righteousness, "that if you tried as earnestly as I have done since October to avoid any expectoration that you would lose the habit altogether as I have done." It was her idea that Mill was bothered by phlegm because he was in the habit of spitting, not that he was forced to spit because he was bothered by phlegm.

Phyllis Rose, *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 138.

Eric: Did you see my Bottom at Stratford-upon-Avon?
Ernie: I'm afraid not.
Eric: A pity — many people consider it my best part.

Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise, *The Morecambe and Wise Joke Book* (1979). Suggested by Leonard Stokely, a reader from Baltimore, Maryland.

Do you carrot all for me?
My heart beets for you,
With your turnip nose
And your radish face.
You are a peach.
If we cantaloupe,
Lettuce marry;
Weed make a swell pear.

Anon in Carl Withers, ed., *A Rocket in My Pocket* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948), p. 193.

There's a time to go to the typewriter. It's like a dog -- the way a dog before it craps wanders around in circles -- a piece of earth, an area of grass, circles it for a long time before it squats. It's like that -- figuratively circling the typewriter getting ready to write, and then finally one sits down.

Edward Albee, quoted in George Plimpton, ed., *The Writer's Chapbook* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 49. Suggested by Pamela K. Donnelly, a reader from Los Angeles.

Robert Gibbins



Carl Sandburg
(*Always the Young Strangers*): A Norwegian told me his mother sent him to a store to get something and he came home saying he forgot what she sent him for. She sent him again with the words, "What you don't keep in your head your feet must make up for, my little man." When he ate with his fingers and his grandmother told him to eat with his fork, he said, "Fingers were made before forks," and she cornered him, "But not your fingers."

[Wild Bill] Hickok did not enjoy his [tour with Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show from September 1873 to March 1874]. Complaints that he did not take either the productions or himself and his companions seriously led to friction. It was also alleged that he overloaded his pistols so that Indians or "supers" who were supposed to whoop and drop dead before his deadly aim suffered from powder burns and continued jumping about. It was also claimed that he threatened the spotlight operator because he gave Cody more attention than he gave Wild Bill and that, when the unfortunate man did turn the light full upon him, Hickok yelled to him to turn the "blamed thing off" because it almost blinded him. Early in the season he had caused a minor uproar -- but won the audiences' hearts -- by refusing to drink cold tea and tell stories: "Either I get real whiskey or I ain't tellin' no story!"

Joseph G. Rosa, *The West of Wild Bill Hickok* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), p. 143. Suggested by Edna Milner, a reader from Tulsa, Oklahoma.

When I was a kid I was never any good at finding Easter eggs. At the class Easter egg hunt, everyone would run yelling and screaming after the eggs, finding them right and left until their baskets practically ran over, while I stumbled around never finding any unless it was one that had been stepped on. It never occurred to me that in a big grassy field the eggs weren't just scattered at random. Later I discovered that because we were SUPPOSED to find them, they were always placed next to other objects: the bases of trees, fence posts, water faucets, etc. I know that now, but back then, I was unable to break the code.

Vernon Fisher, *Navigating by the Stars* (Chicago and Kansas City: Landfall Press and Karl Oskar Group, 1989), p. 12. Suggested by Anna Martin, a reader from Cedar Falls, Iowa.

During his [Einstein's] Zurich stay the woman doctor, Paulette Brupbacher, asked the whereabouts of his laboratory. With a smile he took a fountain pen out of his breast pocket and said: "Here."

Carl Seelig, quoted in A.P. French, *Einstein: A Centenary Volume* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 237.

Probably many people wiser than I dislike some of the things I like, such as hoeing, canning, cleaning house, cutting corn fodder, living in the country, being in my thirties, dahlias, roses, meals on time, empty houses with flowers still growing in the yards, old furniture, small boys, books, newspaper editorials, astronomy, chickens, dogs, cows, horses, meat or gravy cooked in a cast-iron skillet, waffles, carrots and spinach.

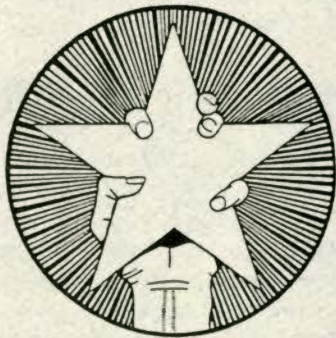
It is quite likely that others, and I have no quarrel with them, like many of the things I hate, including petunias, cats, children who have been taught that they are cute, grown-ups who try to act kiddish, male or female sissies, superiority complexes, machine hemstitching, tablecloths hemmed on the machine, cows with horns, weedy gardens, dwelling houses painted green, rain on washday, so-called living rooms that are only used for company, and overstuffed davenports. Large women in striped or checked dresses, bad table manners, being flatly contradicted, people who handle books roughly or who lay an open book face down upon a table, people who read over my shoulder, inquisitiveness, concrete walks in front of farm homes, fried parsnips, mashed potatoes, interruptions while ironing, washing milk pails, cleaning muddy overshoes, cooking for visitors who do not come, going to bed, getting up, washing yesterday's dishes, and talking over the telephone.

Inez McAlister Faber, *Out Here on Soap Creek* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982), pp. 23-24.

**Cogito ergo spud: I think
therefore I yam.**

Highly Recommended (Macintosh computer software): *Publish It! Easy* Version 2.0, published by Timeworks, 444 Lake Cook Road, Deerfield, Illinois 60015. Most graphic designers seem to agree (whether true or not) that *Aldus PageMaker* and *QuarkXPress* are the page layout programs most commonly used by professionals, both of which are often too expensive for students and individuals. As an inexpensive, easy-to-learn and amazingly versatile alternative (word processing, page layout, type manipulation and drawing and painting all in one), those with modest budgets should try this software, designated by *MacUser* magazine as the "Best Page Design Program" of 1990.

Right: Illustration by Rockwell Kent, from Dan Burne Jones, *The Prints of Rockwell Kent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).



One of the nice things about Rome is that one never knows exactly what time it is. No two clocks ever agree. One perceives the moment through a soft focus, in which the edges of all duties and commitments are happily cushioned.

Rudolf Arnheim, *Parables of Sun Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 228. Suggested by Douglas J. Nelsen, a reader from Stillwater, Minnesota.

And we keep this corner-of-the-eye thing. I remember when we were in training to be night fliers in the Navy, I learned, very strangely, that the rods of the eye perceive things at night in the corner of the eye that we can't see straight ahead. That's not a bad metaphor for the vision of art. You don't stare at the mystery, but you *can* see things out of the corner of your eye that you weren't supposed to see.

William Meredith, quoted in George Plimpton, ed., *The Writer's Chapbook* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 41.

A soldier up for medical exam proved to have been wearing a truss for the last 6 years, and was classified as P.E. or Permanently Exempt. On his way out he gave this news to his pal, who immediately asked for the loan of the truss, which was granted. The examiner asked how long he had been wearing it, and he said, "Six years," whereupon he was classified as M.E. "What's that?" he asked. "Middle East." "How can I go to the Middle East when I've been wearing a truss for 6 years?" "If you can wear a truss for 6 years upside-down, you can jolly well ride a camel for 6 months."

Edward Marsh, *Ambrosia and Small Beer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), p. 220.

Mary had a little lamb,
The doctor was surprised.
But when MacDonald had a farm,
The doctor nearly died.



Jennifer Helm

Highly Recommended: Hugh Aldersey-Williams, et al, *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1990). Available in paperback with full-color reproductions, this is a collection of experimental student designs (posters, furniture, interiors, products) – many of them breathtaking – produced since 1980 in the Department of Design graduate studios headed by Katherine and Michael McCoy at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. In particular, some of the posters have all of the complex adroitness and wit that, until a few years ago, one might have observed in the fine arts.

Highly Recommended: Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). A guide to the flora and fauna of intentional confusion, a.k.a. "creative thought." Chapters 3 through 7 (Reversals and Inversions; Play With Boundaries; Play With Infinity; The Uses of Simultaneity; and Arrangement and Rearrangement within a Closed Field) are a typology of means by which we purposely behave in ways that are "wrong" or "confusing."

I hate people who think in trends. I hate people who think because you're in the twentieth century, you have to perform a certain way. Each group, when it goes out of style, wants to join the great eclectic. No, I'm sorry, stay off my shelf. I don't think God is vengeful. But I am.

Jack Levine, interviewed by Joseph Podlesnik in "Jack Levine: Nothing New, Nothing Old, Just Good and Bad" in *Q: A Journal of Art* (Ithaca, NY: Department of Art, Cornell University), May 1991, p. 15.

Ernest Hemingway (donning a war correspondent's uniform, imitating Ernie Pyle): I'm Ernie Hemorrhoid, the poor man's Pyle.



Highly Recommended: *The North American Review*, founded in 1815, the nation's oldest magazine. Published quarterly by the University of Northern Iowa, it is available at libraries and newsstands throughout the country. In recent years, it has been nominated 8 times and has twice won the National Magazine Award in the fiction category, outdistancing such competitors as *The New Yorker*, *Harpers*, *The Atlantic*, and others. According to a recent *Writers' Digest* poll of 100 editors and literary agents, it is one of the five "most influential" fiction magazines in America. Its covers and story illustrations by Gary Kelley, Elizabeth Yarosz, Osie Johnson, et al. have frequently received awards from the Society of Illustrators, *Print, Communication Arts*, and the Society of Publication Designers. Annual subscriptions are \$14 from *The North American Review*, University of Northern Iowa, 1227 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-9913.

BALLAST is published in Iowa (birthplace of Fran Allison of *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* fame, and the state that gave birth to the Corn Blues) in a region increasingly listed among the most desirable places in which to live (alright so why not move here *soon* before we all go stir crazy!). All subscriptions (including gift subscriptions) must be mailed to the following new address:

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BALLAST is published in a limited edition and back issues are not available. However, the magazine may be xeroxed to provide others with copies, but the copies must never be altered or sold. Our readers are encouraged to suggest offbeat examples of visual and verbal insight of the sort that the journal might publish. Original material must be explicitly labeled as such. Material which is not original must clearly make note of its author and source. All contributions are unpaid, and unsolicited material will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

BALLAST doesn't have a budget really. For six years, it has operated at a loss. Even if we received stamps from everyone who receives the magazine, we would still lose money on printing, without beginning to account for research, typesetting, paste-up, correspondence, making hay, cloud seeding, whitewashing the barn, swilling the geese, delousing the owls, and crawling back and forth to town. The losses are currently offset by donations from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the Subscription Boy's paycheck. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such contributions are surely not tax deductible), we will *sometimes* accept a check (made payable to Roy R. Behrens), exotic horned goats, Dalmatian dogs, an optical hen, and an air conditioned riding mower with power steering.

**With this issue
please note our latest
change of address**

Ladles and jelly
spoons:
I come before you
To stand behind
you
And tell you
something
I know nothing
about.

Next Thursday,
Which is Good
Friday,
There'll be a
mothers' meeting
For fathers only.

Wear your best
clothes
If you haven't any,
And if you can
come
Please stay home.

Admission free;
Pay at the door.
Take a seat
And sit on the
floor.

It makes no
difference where
you sit;
The man in the
gallery is sure to
spit.
We thank you for
your unkind
attention.

The next number
will be
The four corners of
the round table.

Anon, from Carl
Withers, ed., *A
Rocket in My Pocket*
(New York: Henry
Holt, 1948), pp. 199-
200.

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